

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJ: GKR-SIHANOUK POLEMICS

REF: A) STOCKHOLM 100

B. PHNOM PENH 565

C. PEKING 23

1. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, EMBASSY HAS MADE STRONG EFFORTS TO TONE DOWN THE POLEMICAL CONTENT OF PUBLIC GKR UTTERANCES ON THE SUBJECT OF SIHANOUK. STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS ISSUED HERE, EVEN THE MORE INNOCUOUS (AND MAY HAVE NOT FALLEN INTO THAT CATEGORY BY ANY DEFINITION), ONLY PROVOKE ALMOST INSTANT AND ANGRY REJOINDERS BY SIHANOUK. THE NET RESULT OF SUCH EXCHANGES IS HARDLY TO CREATE CLIMATE FOR SOME ULTIMATE FORM OF POLITICAL COMPROMISE IN CAMBODIA.

2. THE TEXT OF THE SIHANOUK TV INTERVIEW (REF A), NOW THAT WE HAVE SEEN IT, APPEARS EVEN Milder THAN WE HAD EXPECTED IN EARLIER COMMENT ONAFP STORY. WE HAD SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING CINC/FANK LTG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ NOT TO REPLY PUBLICLY, AND TO LET THE SIHANOUK ALLEGATIONS PASS, WITHOUT HIGHLIGHTING THEM BY FURTHER COMMENT.

3. MEANWHILE, THE WILD AND SPURIOUS STORY ABOUT THE PEACE TERMS
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ALLEGEDLY GIVEN TO SENATOR MANSFIELD (REF B) HAD PROVOKED

ANOTHER SIHANOUK STATEMENT OF JANUARY 6 (REF C) DENYING THAT ANY NEGOTIATIONS WERE UNDERWAY. THIS CAUSED CHHANG SONG, MINISTER OF INFORMATION, TO MOUNT HIS CHARGER AND DASH OFF INTO THE LISTS WITH A STRONG ATTACK ON SIHANOUK IN A REPLY DATED JANUARY 8. STATEMENT, ISSUED IN MINISTER'S NAME AS SPOKESMAN FOR GKR, ACCUSES SIHANOUK OF TRYING TO RUIN ALL CHANCES FOR PEACE AND TO BLOCK ALL PATHS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO UNCONDITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS. REFERRING TO THE RECENT OPENING OF THE KC DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN, WITH ITS SHARP RISE IN CASUALTIES AND SOME EVIDENCE OF CIVILIAN MASSACRES, BURNING OF VILLAGES, AND THE LIKE, HE ACCUSES SIHANOUK OF IGNORING ALL THIS AS A MODERN NERO, EXCEPT THAT HE IS NOT PRESENT HERE TO WATCH HIS ROME BURN.

4. WE HAVE AGAIN FORCIBLY BROUGHT TO THE MINISTER'S ATTENTION THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF AVOIDING SUCH PERSONAL PUBLIC ATTACKS ON KEY FIGURES OF THE OTHER SIDE. I HAVE ALSO REPEATED THE SAME MESSAGE TO PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET. WE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THE PRESSURE UP ON THIS POINT. UNFORTUNATELY, CHHANG SONG'S LATEST UTTERANCE WILL DOUBTLESS CALL FORTH ANOTHER SIHANOUK BLAST.

DEAN

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